

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2514

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1858

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP OVIP US BC

SUBJ: PRESIDENT KHAMA'S VISIT TO U.S.: FURTHER REACTION

REF: (A) STATE 149240, (B) GABORONE 1797

1. IN THE WEEK SINCE PRESIDENT KHAMA'S RETURN FROM HIS BRIEF VISIT TO THE U.S. THERE HAVE BEEN TWO FACTUAL STORIES IN THE BOTSWANA DAILY NEWS, A PAGE ONE STORY JUNE 13 BRIEFLY REPORTING THE PRESIDENT'S RETURN, AND AN ARTICLE ON PAGE 2, JUNE 15, CONTAINING THE TEXT OF AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S REMARKS AT HIS DINNER IN HONOR OF PRESIDENT KHAMA ON JUNE 8 AND THE LATTER'S REPLY.

2. THERE HAS BEEN NO SPONTANEOUS REACTION OR FOLLOW UP FROM GOB OFFICIALS DESPITE A SUCCESSION OF MEETINGS WITH THEM BY EMBASSY OFFICERS DURING THE PAST WEEK. IN THE ABSENCE OF VOLUNTARY COMMENT, WE HAVE TAKEN TWO LOW-KEY SOUNDINGS, ONE WITH JOE LEGWAILA, SENIOR PRIVATE SECRETARY, WHO ACCOMPANIED KHAMA, AND FOREIGN MINISTER MOGWE WHO DID NOT.

3. DCM FOUND LEGWAILA LESS THAN HIS USUAL FORTHCOMING SELF. WHEN THE TRIP WAS MENTIONED, LEGWAILA COMMENTED THAT ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN "VERY SMOOTH", THE BOSTON LIVING QUARTERS "JUST RIGHT" AND AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S DINNER "MUCH APPRECIATED BY ALL". BEYOND THOSE DESCRIPTIONS, LEGWAILA WAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY

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RETICENT, ACKNOWLEDGED THE VICE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION TO KHAMA TO MEET IN WASHINGTON AND THE REASONS FOR DECLINING. HE DID NOT MENTION THE CONGRATULATORY LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER OR VOLUNTEER OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ATMOSPHERE OR SUBSTANCE OF THE VISIT. THE NET IMPRESSION HE CONVEYED WAS OF DISINCLINATION TO DISCUSS IT.

4. AT DINNER JUNE 16, I HAD OCCASION TO DISCUSS A WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS WITH MINEXTAFF ARCHIE MOGWE INCLUDING THE NIAMEY MEETING OF AFRO-ARAB MINISTERS, HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP AS MEMBER OF OAU MEDIATION COMMITTEE TO SAO TOME, CABINET CHANGES IN GOB AND LATTER'S INTERVENTION TO PREVENT 38 BATSWANA FROM ATTENDING THE WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL IN HAVANA. DESPITE SMALL GROUP THROUGHOUT THE EVENING, HE MADE ONLY OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO "FRIENDLY EXCHANGE OF REMARKS" BETWEEN PRESIDENT KHAMA AND AMBASSADOR YOUNG REPORTED IN THE DAILY NEWS. SINCE HE HAD RAISED THE SUBJECT BUT HAD NOT COMMENTED ON THE VISIT, AS HE PREPARED TO LEAVE, I ASKED IF HE HAD IMPRESSIONS OF THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP. MOGWE REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT ACCOMPANY THE PRESIDENT. I SAID I REALIZED THAT. AFTER REFLECTING A MOMENT, MOGWE CONTINUED: "LOOK, IF WE HAD RECEIVED A TIMELY RESPONSE ON OUR REQUEST FOR A MEETING, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER. AND IF THE REPLY HAD BEEN FAVORABLE, I WOULD HAVE ACCOMPANIED THE PRESIDENT." HE DID NOT ELABORATE. HE SPOKE IN A SPIRIT THAT COULD BE DESCRIBED AS RESIGNATION TINGED WITH REGRET.

5. COMMENT: THE CONTRAST IS NOTABLE BETWEEN MOGWE'S FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE IN DISCUSSION OF WIDE RANGE OF OTHER SUBJECTS AND HIS BRIEF REFERENCE AND COMMENT TO THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT. ONE CANNOT HELP BUT BE STRUCK BY THE ABSENCE THUS FAR OF ENTHUSIASM AMONG PRESIDENT KHAMA'S POLITICAL ADVISERS IN DISCUSSING THE VISIT. NORLAND

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